Alliance Statements: **Regional COVID-19 Holiday Statement**, **Healthy Places Index & State's Blueprint Health Equity Metric**, **Racism is a Public Health Crisis** and **Statement on Standing with Health Officials**
Alliance in the News: **Shifting the Power Paradigm: Centering Community to Build a Healthy, Equitable, and Just Future**

Public Health Alliance
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

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Improving Vaccination Accessibility for Individuals Living with Disabilities

Centering Lived Experience in Los Angeles County

Improving Vaccination Accessibility for Individuals Living with Disabili…

Landmark legislation, such as The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and more recently the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act of 2008, have for decades worked to prohibit discrimination against people living with disabilities in several areas, including access to state and local government' programs and services. Yet, individuals living with disabilities continue to face barriers to access and true representation in government policies and processes. These barriers have been amplified throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response, including during COVID-19 vaccine distribution and administration.

Health leaders from The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's (LADPH) Center for Health Equity are working to address those barriers and improve vaccination accessibility. In partnership with key community stakeholders with lived experience and organizations that serve communities with disabilities, LADPH staff have co-developed and are working to implement a set of core recommendations to improve access to COVID-19 vaccinations for individuals living with disabilities. The recommendations developed are a recognition of the urgent need to develop processes and systems to improve accessibility for communities with disabilities throughout Los Angeles County. The recommendations developed focus on centering the experience of individuals with disabilities and work to ensure that the processes for vaccine distribution go beyond the legal requirements outlined in the ADA, and work to truly ensure access to vaccines and other vital government services for all. While the recommendations and current partnership efforts address current COVID-19 vaccination efforts, these recommendations may also be applied to COVID-19 testing and broader emergency response activities both during COVID-19 and beyond. In this video, we are joined by Heather Jue Northover, LADPH Center for Health Equity Director and Hector Ochoa, Director of Public Policy for the Southern California Resource Services for Independent Living, as they discuss the importance of centering individuals with lived experience in designing vaccine distribution solutions that truly work for all..

KEY PARTNERS FEATURED

+ Los Angeles Department of Public Health, Center for
Health Equity – Heather Jue Northover, Director
+ Southern California Resource Services for Independent
Living – Hector Ochoa, Director of Public Policy

KEY FUNDING MECHANISMS

+ Together Towards Health

LADPH Center for Health Equity Recommendations

Click here for the full list or recommendations.

Improving COVID-19 Vaccination Accessibility for Individuals Living with Disabilities

The Center for Health Equity (Center) developed a set of recommendations to improve access to COVID-19 vaccinations for individuals living with disabilities. These recommendations were based on feedback from key community stakeholders with lived experience and organizations that serve communities with disabilities. While their comments specifically addressed current COVID-19 vaccination efforts, their guidance may be applied to COVID-19 testing and broader emergency response activities.

Apply a human-centered design[1] approach.

- *Exceed*, don't just meet, the legal requirements mandated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Compliance does not always equal access. Intentionally design interventions with disabled communities in mind.

- Recruit and equitably compensate real life users who are disabled to evaluate accessibility. For example, avoid relying solely on compliance software to validate that your website code is 508 compliant. It is not the same as assessing the actual user experience.

- Be aware and mindful of intersectionality. Disabled individuals may experience additional barriers due to other personal circumstances and identities (e.g., immigration status, limited English proficiency, income level, race/ethnicity).

Ensure fair access to information and vaccination appointments.

- Offer a "text-only" version of documents and/or include ALT-TEXT (alternative text) that describes embedded images in documents. Also ensure social media posts with graphics or other images include ALT-TEXT (alternative text) or image descriptions to accommodate blind or low-vision followers.

- When creating social media video content, include closed- or opened-captioning. Avoid relying on auto-generated options through the media platforms.

- Ensure webpage/website compatibility with cell phones. Many people do not have the resources for home Internet and computers or are more familiar with using cell phones to navigate the Internet and access information online.

- For online appointment systems, ensure the vaccination appointment webpage and registration portal is compatible with screen readers. Arrange content/design code so the assistive technology (screen reader) reads the important information first (e.g., phone number for assistance).

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[1] Human Centered design is a "creative process that starts with people and ends with innovative solutions tailored to their needs." Definition adapted from https://upliftfs.org/what-is-human-centered-design/

Center for Health Equity
LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
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COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health

OPERATIONALIZING INNOVATIVE EQUITY STRATEGIES

- CHE health leaders played a critical role as conduits for change and key community stakeholders served as channels of communication for health department leadership. These relationships helped build trust and accountability.
  People with lived experiences with disabilities were intentionally identified to ensure representation was balanced, alongside agency staff and other key stakeholders when developing recommendations.
- CHE conducted a series of focus groups, one specifically focused on designing solutions for individuals living with disabilities, which included representation from local government offices, transportation agencies, and service provider agencies.
  Health leaders acted early on "low-hanging fruit" recommendations and began to implement changes to address accessibility issues of online resources and accessibility barriers at physical vaccination sites.
- A toll-free number was established to support residents that were unable to use the website to find information and book COVID-19 vaccine appointments.
- Partner organizations also helped book appointments and provided transportation to and from vaccination sites.
- LADPH provided resources to partners organizations to support their ongoing engagement to inform equitable strategies for COVID-19 vaccine distribution and to help develop recommendations on how to advance equity at the policy level, on the ground, and through logistics and communications.
- CHE designated a position that will focus on communities and people with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (IDD).

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Addressing accessibility issues for people with disabilities needs to be a concerted effort and go above and beyond the bare minimum outlined in the ADA.

- Equity strategies that focus initially on individuals with disabilities can also have cross-cutting benefits for other populations such as older adults, low-income communities and communities of color.
- Providing resources to community groups facilitated longer-term meaningful engagement with health department staff.
- Recommendations created specifically for the COVID-19 response can be applied more broadly and integrated into the basics of emergency management to ensure a stronger response during future public health and climate emergencies.

For more information:

+ LADPH Center for Health Equity

+ LADPH COVID-19 Webpage

+ Southern California Resource Services for Independent Living COVID-19 Webpage

The Alliance is fiscally administered by the Public Health Institute.

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